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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: VIOLENT ATTACKS IN BASRAH DESPITE STATE OF EMERGENCY

REF: BASRAH 56

CLASSIFIED BY: Mark Marrano, Deputy Regional Coordinator, REO
Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

11. (U) Summary: Following a suicide bomb at the main marketplace in Basrah, a Sunni mosque was attacked leading to increased fear among the Sunni population in Basrah. It is unclear exactly who was responsible for either attack, however, the State of Emergency declared by the Prime Minister has not yet led to additional security for the citizens of Basrah. End summary.

12. (C) On the evening of June 3, a bomb exploded in Basrah's main marketplace killing and wounding dozens. Reports of the number of dead and wounded vary. Basrah's Police Joint Operations Center (PJOC), however, reported 27 were killed and 62 wounded. The PJOC reported that the device used was a propane canister filled with TNT carried by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle. The bomb exploded at approximately 17:55 hours, a time when the marketplace would normally be very crowded.

13. (C) A few hours after the bombing, Iraqi security forces surrounded a nearby Sunni mosque, the Al Arab Mosque, and a firefight ensued between the security forces and the people inside the mosque. Again, reports vary as to which Iraqi security forces participated in this operation. The British Consul General (CG) told the Deputy Regional Coordinator that members of the Iraqi Intelligence Unit went to the mosque in order to apprehend the perpetrators of the marketplace bombing. The British CG confirmed reports to the REO that dead bodies (numbers vary from seven to nine) remained inside the mosque, but said that they had not yet been removed because the mosque was sealed and considered a crime scene.

14. (C) In a telephone conversation with REO personnel, Nadim Hamid, Head of security for the Basrah Sunni Endowment, said that the people gathered in the mosque were not connected to the bombing but were Sunnis who had gathered there because they were afraid. Mr. Nadim placed numerous telephone calls to REO personnel during the course of the night of June 3 and morning of June 4 to request assistance in removing the dead bodies from the mosque. Originally, Mr. Nadim said that members of a militia had attacked the mosque and that people were afraid to go inside the mosque to retrieve the bodies out of fear that the militia members had wired the mosque with explosives. He indicated that no Iraqi Security Forces were present in the area and that he was requesting assistance from the British as well. Family members of the deceased were subsequently allowed to enter the mosque later in the morning. In a separate telephone conversation with Haji Khalaf Al Issa, Head of the Sunni Islamic Iraqi Party in Basrah, he told REO political locally engaged staff that the Iraqi Army and Police were involved in attacking the mosque. Haji Khalaf Al Issa is also a member of the newly formed security committee, which he claimed would be holding a

meeting on the marketplace bombing and attack on the Al Arab Mosque and would be sending a report to Baghdad.

¶5. (C) Comment: It is still unclear exactly who was responsible for the attacks on the marketplace and on the Sunni mosque. What is clear, however, is that the State of Emergency has not yet provided any additional security on the streets of Basrah to prevent attacks. In addition, there are many groups willing to use such attacks as a pretext to carry out sectarian violence. The "iron fist" that Prime Minister maliki alluded to in his speech here in Basrah last week, is the only way to get the security situation under control. Unfortunately, it has yet to be used. End Comment.

MARRANO